

## FOREWORD

The history of the Louisville Engineer District encompasses more than two centuries of Ohio Valley and American history, with such diverse activities as frontier exploration and mapping, emergency fortification construction during America's major wars, the struggle to open Ohio Valley waterways as channels of commerce, construction of immense navigation, flood control and military base projects, flood fights, and a hundred other missions, all reaching epic proportions. All of us have found the daily work of the District so pressing that we have seldom found time to reflect on where we have been, to place the multi-faceted continuing operations of the Louisville District in its historical perspective, or to consider where we are headed.

In this history of the Louisville District and its distant predecessors we attempt to trace the origins of this institution from its beginnings, when British Army Engineers first explored and mapped the Ohio Valley frontier and Colonel Jonathan Williams, first Chief of the modern Corps of Engineers, descended the Ohio River in a flatboat to direct an experimental Engineer School on what was then the frontier of the United States, through the first primitive efforts to make the inland rivers navigable, to the pioneering canalization projects and the modern flood control and water resource development programs that grew out of the Ohio Valley flood disasters of the early Twentieth Century. The development of the Ohio Valley since its first settlement two centuries ago has been swift. From frontier to a predominantly agrarian section to a balanced industrial-agrarian society, development has proceeded as the population of the region swelled, and the Army Engineers have played an intimate role in that development. A primary goal of this history is to cast new light on the significance of the contributions of the Army Engineers to that development.

Utilitarian review of Engineer operations is a common practice in the Louisville Engineer District, and in this history we have attempted to review the overall program of the District and its predecessors since its genesis, resting on the principle that past experience provides the firmest foundation for improving the efficiency of any organization. Yet the Louisville District is, and has been always, a human institution responsive to human needs, and as such the history of the District is an intrinsically human story, sometimes one of high adventure, sometimes humorous, always turbulent. For two centuries, we, the Army Engineers have devoted ourselves to total performance of the missions assigned to us by the people of the Ohio Valley and the nation, and this is the story of our individual and team efforts, our hopes, our despairs, our successes, our failures, and our sacrifices.

And so, as we review our activities of the past, I can only hope that all of you who have performed so well will strive to meet the continuing challenges.

Louisville, Ky.  
24 December 1974

CHARLES J. FIALA  
Colonel, Corps of Engineers  
District Engineer